

Jeroen Billiet (Royal Conservatoire - School of Arts of University College Ghent)

BIOGRAPHY



Jeroen Billiet (°Tielt, Belgium 1977) studied the horn with Luc Bergé at the Royal Conservatories of Ghent and Brussels, and obtained a Master degree in Music Performance *magna cum laude* in 2001.

He has since specialised in historical horns and currently plays principal horn with leading ensembles as le Concert d'Astrée (Emmanuelle Haim), B'Rock (René Jacobs) and Insula Orchestra (Laurence Equilbey). He is a founding member of the Mengal Ensemble, a collective of Belgian horn players exploring unknown repertoire for their instrument.

After his post-graduate study '200 years of Belgian Horn school' (Orpheus Institute 2008) he has continued researching the practice of horn playing in Belgium, resulting in a large number of published articles, music productions and recordings.

Jeroen is a full-time research fellow and teacher of natural horn at the School of Arts-University College Ghent and a faculty member of the Royal Conservatory of the AP-institute in Antwerp.

www.corecole.be

TITLE

"Brave Belges" of the Belle Epoque: A Critical Study of Artistic Incentives in the Late-Romantic Ghent Horn Playing Tradition and its Worldwide Legacy

ABSTRACT

"Brave Belges"...

Julius Caesar's reluctant quote from *de bello gallico* might never have sounded as ironical as in a letter written in 1924 by British musicologist WFH Blandford (1864-1952),¹ commenting on the capacities of Raymond Meert (Ghent 1880-Manchester 1950), the Belgian principal horn of the Hallé Orchestra at the time.

During the Belle Epoque time (1871-1914), the musical scene in France, England and the United States attracted many of the well-trained musicians that graduated from the Royal

Conservatories of Brussels, Liège and Ghent. They often became respected musicians that helped to develop the musical scenes of their new homelands.

The horn playing tradition at the Ghent conservatoire is a specific case in this context: intriguingly, some of the most influential horn players of the late-romantic era have been trained in the horn classes of Jean Deprez (Liège 1828-Ghent 1901) and his successor Charles Heylbroeck (Ghent 1871-1945). Philip Farkas (Chicago, 1914-1992), by far the most important American horn teacher of the 20th century, quoted his *Gantois* horn teacher Louis-Victor Dufrasne (Quiévrain 1877-Evanston (IL) 1941) to be "the biggest single influence in my life".

The flourishing era of the Ghent playing tradition was also reflected in a very particular and high-esteemed repertoire in lyrical style, which is unfortunately today greatly neglected.

The amount of premium horn players coming from an, at the time, relatively small and isolated musical centre in a poor industrial country is already remarkable on its own. It is no exaggeration to state that these players' legacy is embedded into the playing of thousands of horn players around the world.

The goal of the "Brave Belgians" doctoral project is not only to rediscover the specific incentives that led towards the success of this specific playing tradition, but also the search for artistic implementation of specific instrumentation, techniques, repertoire and playing style, leading towards new insights into performance of late-romantic horn parts on both modern and historical instruments.

(This six-year research project is funded by the Royal Conservatory of School of Arts Ghent - Ghent University association)

Notes

1 BLANDFORD, W.H.F., brief aan R. Morley Pegge van 29/11/1924: "...the first horn is one Meert, a Belgian –quite good and with a fine command of the high register, though like other braves Belges he is overfond of the B-flat alto crook"

RECITAL PROGRAMME

Leopold Wallner: (Kiev 1847-Brussels 1913): *Romance* (1890)

Robert Herberigs (Ghent 1886 - Oudenaarde 1974): excerpts from *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1912)

*Exposition

*Andante

*Epilogue

W.A. Mozart (arr. Ch. Heylbroeck ca 1910): *Berceuse de Mozart* (K.350)

Robert Guillemin (Gent 1882-Paris 1945): *Chant d'Automne* (1929)